

First Aerial Mail Route in Use This Week

New York-Washington Service, Available to Public at 24 Cents an Ounce, Will Be Great Time Saver

THE daily New York to Washington aerial mail service scheduled to be inaugurated Wednesday of this week, will start on time provided the Senate has meanwhile passed the appropriation bill carrying an item of \$100,000 to provide the funds. And perhaps it will anyway. Postmaster-General Burleson and Second Assistant Postmaster-General Preager, the latter the official father of the project, are very eager to see it realized, and a way may be found to finance the beginning even if the appropriation is further delayed.

Everything is ready but the funds. The airplanes secured from the War Department are at Mineola. Belmont Park as the New York terminal and Potomac Park as the Washington one, with Bustleton, North Philadelphia, as the Philadelphia way station, were selected some weeks ago and the landing enclosures, hangars, &c., are prepared. The special 24 cent stamps for first class letters are printed.

Appropriation Bill Held Up.

At the moment of writing the appropriation bill is reported held up in the Senate because of this item. Two Senators, who shall be nameless and to whom all airplanes and uses of planes look alike, did not see why any of America's should be diverted to postal service when the welkin is ringing with complaints of the national failure to get enough planes ready for war use in France.

On receiving news of the obstruction President Alan R. Hawley of the Aero Club of America sent the following telegram to Senators Wadsworth, Calder, Overman, Bankhead, Swanson and Weeks and to Speaker Clark of the House of Representatives:

"Please make every effort to have appropriation for mail carrying by airplane increased to \$500,000. Present appropriation is not large enough to pay cost of running mail line for one year and establish two additional lines to give advanced cross-country flying training to military aviators who will pilot the postal airplanes.

"It is absolutely necessary that this cross country flying training be given to our aviators before sending them overseas, and while they get this training their services can be utilized to carry mail.

"Had we done this in the last two years

Germany's Excuse.

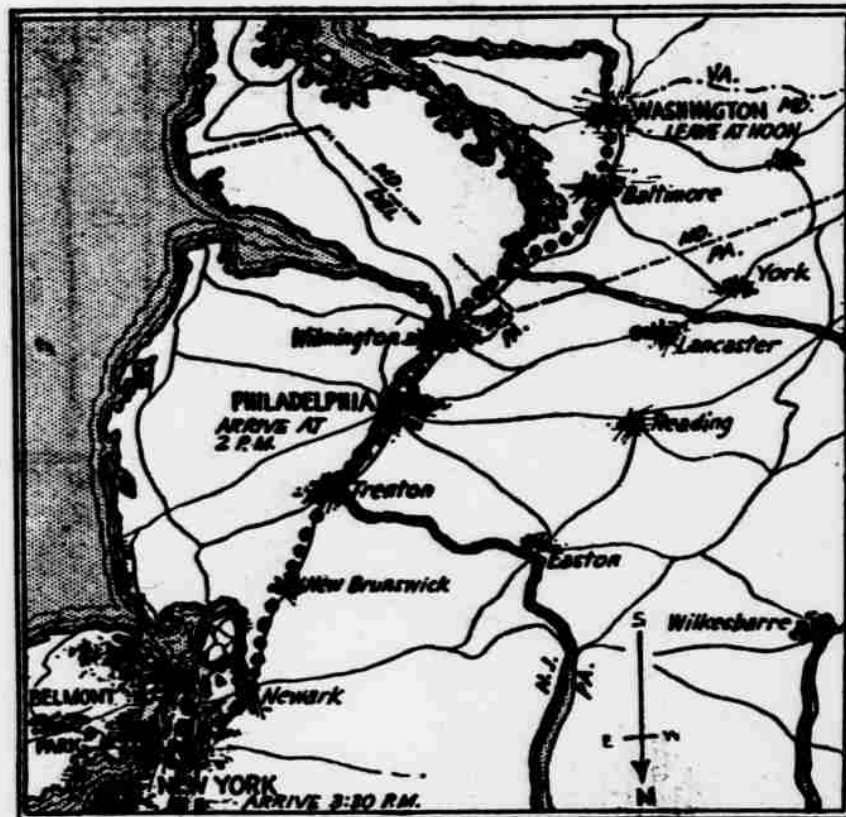
EX-PRESIDENT TAFT, whose ready smile has endeared him to millions of Americans regardless of their political persuasions, had a group of serious business men laughing recently, perhaps for the first time, over the occasion of our entry into the world war.

In the course of a post-prandial speech he reviewed Germany's piratical acts on the high seas, citing the sinking of the Lusitania and like instances in which American citizens, men, women and children, were ruthlessly murdered by the U-boats of the Central Empires.

Germany's explanation of these acts on the ground that she was not shooting at Americans but merely retaliating on the British reminded him forcibly, said Mr. Taft, of a letter Col. Roosevelt once read to the members of his Cabinet when he was President. The letter was written by a former member of the Colonel's Rough Riders.

Many men of this cavalry unit, Mr. Taft continued, his eyes beginning to twinkle, had picturesque pasts which may or may not have accounted for their unquestioned gallantry in action during our brush with Spain. This particular Rough Rider was writing from a prison in the West.

"Dear Colonel," his letter ran, "I am in trouble again, as you see, but this time it is not my fault. I am in here for shooting a lady in the eye, but I was not shooting at the lady. I was shooting at my wife."



Birdseye view of the New York-Washington aerial mail route.

we would have had several hundred fully trained aviators to send to France upon our entry in the war, which would have given a sufficient balance of power to insure aerial supremacy to the Allies. The least we can do at this critical time is not to make the same mistake again.

"Please do your best not to permit obstructionists to defeat this appropriation when it comes up in the Senate this morning on the unfounded technicality that we are short of airplanes. The machines to be used for carrying mail are training machines, and carrying mail affords training to military pilots which so far they have not got in any other way."

The telegram covers the reply of the sponsors of this first American aerial mail service to the apprehensive Senators. No planes suitable for use at the front will be used in carrying the mail, and the aviators will be future military pilots, receiving practical training and getting experience.

Plans for the mail service were complete early in the present year. The service will be experimental only in point of the adjustment of the airplane to safe and expeditious mail handling and of the development of methods of maintaining daily service regardless of the weather.

At first on days when rain and fog would obscure a pilot's vision and make it dangerous for him to try to land, the mail meant for the airplanes will be despatched by courier on the 11 o'clock train either way and will be given special delivery to insure it being delivered the day of mailing.

The New York terminal in Belmont Park was selected only after consideration of a dozen or more proposed spots in Manhattan and The Bronx and on Long Island. Central Park was mentioned at one time. Van Cortlandt was considered, but the 300 foot bluff which the airman must over pass immediately after getting off and soaring across the lake made this seem a hazardous choice.

May Drop Mail Bags Here.

In order to have the mail from Washington delivered in Manhattan as quickly as possible and before the plane has gone on to the Belmont Park terminal experiments will be made from time to time in dropping mail sacks from a plane in motion. The use of parachutes has been discussed. Should such a device succeed the pilot would fly low over the selected point in Manhattan, as near the post office as possible, drop his sacks and go on to the terminal.

In the beginning mail will be confined to letters of the common size and weights, though on the first trip Wednesday a limited number of sealed parcels at the full rate of airplane postage will be accepted.

These must not be over thirty inches in girth and length combined—about the size of an octavo book—and must not weigh more than two pounds apiece.

Letters mailed by plane at New York, Washington or Philadelphia may be sent on to any part of the United States which can be reached by the usual mail connections. The local postmasters will specify the stations and hours for such mailing.

The appropriation bill carrying the aerial mail service item passed the House

March 25. It provided a minimum charge of 24 cents an ounce. First class letters beside the airplane stamp must also bear the regular 3 cent stamp.

How the aerial mail route will pan out financially, when the revenue it yields is compared with the cost of operation has not been figured. The specifications called for planes capable of carrying 300 pounds of mail. Roughly heavy first class mail as handled by the post offices runs about twenty-eight packages to the pound, lighter mail (letters) to fifty, mixed to about forty-two.

Thus a 300 pound load would average some 1,200 pieces of mail, the revenue from which at the 24 cent rate would be over \$2,500 a trip if all mail carried paid revenue. But as a considerable portion of the constantly increasing war mail between New York and Washington is franked, being official, this figure would be somewhat reduced.

Estimates of the gross revenue a trip have varied between the sum mentioned and \$800. No estimate of the net profit with operating cost deducted is forthcoming. The only calculation of this kind is embodied in Mr. Hawley's telegram, where he assures the Senators and Speaker that \$100,000 won't pay the cost of running the service for one year.

Philadelphia Stop Planned.

The original idea was to make the one way trip, including the stop at Philadelphia for oil, gasoline and mail delivery and acceptance, in three hours. The fastest trains take more than five, and at the time not only train service but telephone and telegraph communication between New York and Washington is seriously congested, hindering official as well as private business.

At present about an hour more has been added to the time allowed for the airplane trip.

Other specifications for the mail carrying planes are a fuel radius of 200 miles without stop, a maximum speed with full load of 100 miles an hour and a minimum of forty-five, also a climbing speed of 6,000 feet in ten minutes. Augustus Post of the Aero Club of America said in February that all the machines adopted by the aviation section of the Signal Corps at that time could meet the conditions, including those then being used for training aviators for war work.

The New York-Washington aerial mail service will be the first such project realized of many which have been outlined within the last seven years. In 1911 Joseph Stewart, then Second Assistant Postmaster-General, made the first recommendation of the kind from the Post Office Department. He asked for \$50,000 to make a beginning. The matter was referred to the War Department, which killed it; every attempt since that time has met a similar fate until in the present instance Congress at last acted favorably upon a direct appropriation without the War Department's sanction.

On February 12 it was announced in Washington that the War Department was prepared to release all the motors needed for the New York-Washington service, and two weeks later that the department would furnish the machines under an agreement which provided for

War Despatches Carried Regularly From London to French Front, and Other Routes Will Be Used After the War

the use of the mail service in training military aviators.

The military authorities under this agreement were to operate the route a year, after which the Post Office Department was to take it over. Meanwhile the army would furnish machines, aviators, mechanics and repair men. Reserve planes were to be held ready at both ends of the line and at Philadelphia, as well as fast motor wagons to go to the rescue should a mail carrying pilot come down in trouble along the route.

There was a premature announcement in March that the service would be inaugurated April 15, but as the Post Office Department in February, previous to the agreement with the War Department, had called for bids on five mail carrying planes to be ready April 25, this prematurity appears to have been a simple mistake.

In 1915 a Globe-Phoenix (Ariz.) aerial service of planes to carry both passengers and mail over the rough country of the Superstition Mountains was projected, but the project came to nothing. Among later projects that died for lack of the needful appropriation were one in 1915 for two air mail routes in Missouri, which routes were mapped at Mr. Burleson's instance, one in 1916 including a Buzzard's Bay-Nantucket service, and services to the number of twelve between various towns in Alaska, and one discussed in December, 1916, between New York and Chicago, which last had the hearty commendation of President Underwood of the Erie Railroad.

War Despatches Carried.

In January last it was announced that a regular mail service between England and France was planned and would be in operation before the end of the war. An airplane despatch service for military purposes had been regularly in operation between London and Paris or the battle-front for some time.

Italy has worked out plans for the post-bellum use of her great Caproni planes in a regular service to the Italian insular possessions and to Tripoli. A municipal commission in Lyons, France, has reported studies of the extension of aerial mails to Algeria and Morocco. Last July test flights were made for the Mexican Government between Pachuca and Mexico city, a distance of forty-five miles, with a future service in view to be operated between Vera Cruz and the capital.

The Cologne Gazette of March 24 reported that aerial mail service between Vienna and Kieff and between Odessa and Constant was being established. Nothing more about it has since appeared.

Russia's Fall Foretold

QUOTATIONS from the Bible and the use of the name of the Deity are favorite methods of the Kaiser and his subjects for trying to justify themselves for bringing on the world disaster. Now they have come forward with a verse from the Book of Daniel to prove that a Biblical prophecy has come true in the collapse of the Russian fighting forces. The verse is:

"And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

The Germans point out that the period of 1,290 days corresponds with the period from August 1, 1914, when war began between Germany and Russia, and February 11, 1918, when it was announced that Trotzky had declared the war at an end.

Yaphank Bennie in France.

So many inquiries have reached THE SUNDAY SUN concerning the letters from Yaphank Bennie at Camp Upton that announcement is made that he has reached France. It is believed that Bennie soon will write of the experiences he and his fellows are undergoing abroad.